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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 001659

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN: SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE ROBERT GATES

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (S) Jordan is increasing its contributions in Afghanistan and to regional security efforts, reaching out to Syria to provide an alternative to Iranian influence, and maintaining its focus on a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The King is able to carry out this ambitious regional agenda with the support of USG financial assistance.

In FY09, Jordan received USD 547 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and USD 335 million in Foreign Military Finance Funds (FMF), plus USD 150 million forward-funded with FY10 FMF funds. Looking forward, Jordan hopes Iraq will be able to function as a secure and stable Arab partner in the region, but Jordan is also disappointed by our decision not to leave behind or store military equipment from the redeployment from Iraq through Jordan. End Summary.

King's July Visit to U.S.

¶2. (S) King Abdullah returned on July 19 from a 12-day visit to the U.S. He participated in an international economic forum in Sun Valley, Idaho, and continued on with personal travel accompanied by his son, Hussain, who was named Crown Prince on July 2. Although the King sought a meeting with the President, it was not possible to accommodate his request due to competing scheduling demands at the White House.

Middle East Peace

¶3. (S) Jordan continues to play a critical role in fostering Middle East peace and a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During the last few months, the King and other senior Jordanian government officials have been consulting closely with their counterparts to build regional support for the President's policy and Arab agreement on "deposits" which can be used to reciprocate positive Israeli steps towards peace. Examples of the type of specific items under discussion include the opening of trade offices, extension of overflight permission to Israeli air traffic, linkage of telecommunications networks with Israel, and reduced restrictions on travelers who have transited Israel.

¶4. (S) Jordanians consistently express concern that they will be asked to assume a degree of guardianship over the West Bank, a move that would uncomfortably alter Jordan's demographic makeup by creating a Palestinian super-majority. There is local speculation that the final regional peace agreement could include a "three-state solution" with Jordan

designated as an alternative homeland for the Palestinians. These rumors place pressure on the King both domestically and regionally. He has been out in front in the Arab world during negotiations, but has said that he cannot continue this posture indefinitely without concrete signs of progress.

Iraq

¶15. (S) The King believes that there has been significant progress in Iraq, but characterizes it as a "long, slow crawl to the light." Strategically, Jordan is focused on ensuring that Iraq becomes a member of the moderate Arab community rather than straying into the Iranian sphere of influence. In pursuit of this goal, Prime Minister Dahabi is planning a visit to Baghdad to discuss increasing trade ties and other bilateral issues. Jordan has also agreed to send a Defense Attach to Baghdad, but has not yet made plans to do so.

¶16. (S) In response to a request by General Odierno to provide capacity-building assistance to the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior, Jordan has hosted visits of Iraqi generals to learn about border security operations on the Syrian border and observe military cooperation through joint exercises with CENTCOM.

¶17. (S) Jordan signed a Technical Agreement with CENTCOM in July, laying the groundwork for redeployment of U.S. forces and equipment from Iraq through Jordan. The military and political leadership of Jordan has been disappointed that the U.S. has not committed to leave significant levels of

AMMAN 00001659 002 OF 003

equipment behind in Jordan to be donated, refurbished, or stored.

Iran

¶18. (S) Jordan is concerned about Iranian influence, particularly the potentially destabilizing effect of an Iranian nuclear program, support for Hizballah and Hamas, and links with Iraq and Syria. The King believes that the recent post-election violence in Iran exposes deep fissures in the Iranian polity and forces Iran's leadership to turn inward on domestic issues, limiting their freedom and resources to act internationally. A fear remains that Iran might try to counter these perceptions with a dramatic visible act through its proxies.

¶19. (S) Jordanians and their Arab neighbors link the Middle East peace process with their Iran policy. Arab governments are restricted in their ability to deal with Iran, they say, so long as Iran is viewed as the protector of the Palestinians against Israel. Realization of the two-state solution would consolidate the regional consensus against Iran.

Syria

¶10. (S/NF) Jordan has recently increased its engagement with Syria to discourage Syria's continued dependence on Iran and encourage recent diplomatic overtures by moderate Arab states and the U.S. Jordanians believe that Syria is primarily driven by a desire for economic and political rehabilitation and a regional and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While Syria insists that a return of the Golan Heights is also a top priority, Jordanians believe that this is less important and could be deferred during the bargaining process.

¶11. (S/NF) In consultations with USG visitors, Jordanians have urged the U.S. to insist upon a "meaningful engagement with clear benchmarks." They believe that Syria may drag out

discussions with the USG indefinitely, gaining from the publicity without ever having to make positive contributions for regional peace. Your interlocutors will be interested to hear details about DoD's future plans for engagement, meaningful deliverables expected in return, and acceptable timelines/deadlines for progress.

Domestic Politics

¶12. (S/NF) King Abdullah's political reform efforts have stalled in recent years due to the conservative political establishment, a recalcitrant bureaucracy, and a dysfunctional Parliament. We have been urging the King to re-invigorate reform efforts to expand political space for civil society, advance electoral reform efforts to make Jordan's system more representative and inclusive, and further loosen state control of the economy. The King faces domestic opposition from tribal conservatives, who are committed to maintaining the status quo to preserve and inflate their own diminishing position in society vis-a-vis the Palestinian-Jordanians.

¶13. (C) While Jordan has made economic progress, the effects of reform measures are starting to wane, in part because of the global financial crisis, but also due to poor budget management and poor management of its limited water and energy resources.

¶14. (C) Jordan is a net importer of energy and subject to market fluctuations for oil prices. Jordan sees nuclear energy as its future and the King has placed a priority on developing a civilian nuclear energy program. The GOJ is anxious to sign a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) with the United States, required for U.S. companies to provide nuclear reactors, fuel, or materials. NCA negotiations, however, are currently stagnant with the Chairman of the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission objecting to assurances sought by the U.S. on enrichment. Meanwhile, the GOJ has moved forward with its nuclear energy program by signing NCAs and/or MOUs with Canada, China, France, South Korea, Russia, Romania, and the UK.

Military Assistance and Cooperation

AMMAN 00001659 003 OF 003

¶15. (C) The U.S.-Jordan mil-to-mil relationship is extensive. It features a non-binding MOU, which will come into effect in 2010 and contains a commitment to USD 300 million annually in FMF through 2014. Although these assistance levels are substantial, Jordan is sensitive to decreases in FMF from the height of the war in Iraq. For example, combined FMF was USD 497 million in 2008, USD 307 million in 2007, and USD 305 million in 2006.

¶16. (C) High levels of FMF have enabled Jordan to make significant contributions in Afghanistan and to other regional security priorities. For example, Jordan deployed a 712-soldier Ranger Battalion to Logar Province in Afghanistan to provide election security in July. In May, Jordan deployed a 111-soldier Special Operations unit that conducts combat operations alongside U.S. forces. Also in May, Jordan completed sale of 11 M60 tanks to Lebanon. Lebanon has requested an additional 55 tanks. Earlier this month Jordan signed an agreement with Yemen to provide 25 M113 Armored Personnel Carriers. Jordan has offered to assist with other deployments, counter-piracy missions, and to host training courses and exercises for Iraqi, Lebanese, and other forces.

¶17. (S) Despite the high levels foreign assistance, Jordan continues to request additional financial resources from external sources to fund each contribution to regional security. For example, the equipment donation to Lebanon was financed by the UAE. Training programs for regional forces

are financed through U.S. Anti-Terrorist Assistance (ATA) funds or the U.S. Security Coordinator (USSC). In addition, Jordanian law stipulates that its soldiers deployed overseas are entitled to approximately \$1,700 monthly in combat pay, which has been financed through the United Nations for peacekeeping operations. Jordan has not yet identified a source of combat pay funding for its Afghanistan deployments, but has looked to NATO to cover this expense.

¶18. (S) Jordan has used its FMF to improve its border security and defensive capabilities with a view towards interoperability with U.S. forces. We have been concerned that Jordan has focused too heavily on acquiring new technology and needs to place more emphasis on the training and maintenance needs of existing programs.

Suggested Themes With Jordanian Interlocutors

¶19. (S) It would be useful to touch on the following points during your meetings with King Abdullah and Defense Chairman General Khalid Sarayreh:

-- Thank you for efforts to build Arab support for the specific "deposits" needed to further the Middle East Peace negotiations.

-- Be assured of our continued support for Iraq's safety and security so that it can play a positive and productive role in the community of moderate Arab nations.

-- Appreciate your support for operations in Afghanistan. Hope to discuss ways to continue cooperation even after the Afghan elections.

-- Grateful for your efforts to assist both Lebanon and Yemen with their urgent equipment needs.

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